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MONTHLY RETROSPECT OF POLITICS.

THE Continent of Europe again enjoys peace, except at two of its extremities, the Russians and Turks are waging an unequal war, on the shores of the Black Sea and the Danube, while a more unequal contest is still carrying on in the peninsula of Spain, by a portion of that nation against the French. The emperor Alexander, flattered by receiving part of the Austrian spoils, almost without drawing a sword, is now left by Bonaparte to fight his battles against Turkey, while he himself is occupied for a time with affairs of nearer and more immediate concern. The Russians, indeed by themselves, would be fully sufficient to put an end to the Mahometan Government in Europe, but, if we mistake not, Napoleon will protract the period of its entire overthrow, till he shall be able to devote more attention to the arrangements arising from a matter of such considerable importance. He does not affect to conceal his sentiments respecting the Porte: her alliance with England, if continued, will assuredly accelerate her destruction, renunciation of that, and submission, may put off the evil day until a season of leisure, when negociation will accomplish the work as effectually as an appeal to arms.

The Speech of Bonaparte to the Legislative Body, at the opening of its session, may be considered as the formal public explanation of his sentiments and views, to the nation at large. We have mentioned his reference to Turkey: his opinion of Spain is given in few words, and with little qualification, must be the opinion of every impartial observer; that all appearance of opposition must speedily cease before the immense force that will soon overspread her territory. There has lately been some change made in the formation of the Supreme Junta; an Archbishop has been placed at its head, while the Marquis Romana is supposed to be the spring which regulates its motions. Under this semblance of ecclesiastical authority, a decree, which a few months ago would have been branded as sacrilegious, has been issued, to convert the church plate and some ecclesiastical revenues to the service of the state. This, together with the measure of arming all the inhabitants, and putting the whole means of the country in requisition, as is now rumoured to be done, is too late in being resorted to, as well as the assembling of the Cortes, for the French will occupy the country before there is time for any of them to take effect.

Our attention has lately been directed to the ability and enterprize said to be conspicuous in their generals, since the resignation of Cuesta, and the increased zeal and patriotism of the country since the withdrawing of our troops into Portugal. A general named Aresaga, whom we hardly recognize among the early champions of the Revolution, has been placed at the head of about 55,000 men, and "we go to Madrid," proclaimed here as the watch-word of his army, by those who advocate the mode adopted by the party in Spain, for resisting the French domination. The enemy's generals by superior conduct, have certainly prevailed upon him to advance incautiously within a few leagues of Madrid, but when they could entice him no farther, they fell upon him and almost annihilated his army; while two other armies advancing to his assistance, are also said to be beaten and dispersed. Thus have three generals commanding troops conjointly, greatly exceeding the enemy, and who seemed each jealous of the others assistance in overwhelming him with destruction, been taken in detail, and almost rendered incapable of farther resistance.

A report which was some time prevalent, of a great naval victory having been obtained in the Mediterranean, has turned out to be the destruction of two French ships of the line, on their own coast, by themselves, in order to escape capture, and of a number of transports with stores, for the relief of Barcelona, in the bay of Rosas, by the boats of our fleet. We are sorry that Lord Collingwood, whose former modest and well written account of a great action we admired, should have blazoned forth this petty enterprize, as something eminently useful in counteracting the designs of the enemy.

Of Portugal, which *must* follow the fate of its neighbour country, we shall mention only one circumstance. Agreeably to the usual policy of the French of doing some thing to conciliate the inhabitants of any place they may be in possession of, they had during their late residence in Portugal, suspended, or perhaps abolished the court of the Inquisition; since our reoccupation of that country, this most hated instrument of tyranny and persecution has been revived, and is now a powerful engine in the hands of the governing party, for the destruction of their political adversaries. Is this the way that Englishmen take in these eventful times, to conciliate their allies, and advocate the rights of human nature among the nations?

When Mr. Jackson was sent to supersede Mr. Erskine in America, we much doubted the wisdom of the appointment, and especially when we heard the American prefix to his name, *Copenhagen* Jackson, and considered the influence which the disgraceful recollections that occasioned it, must have in the breasts of these high-minded republicans. Had our situation in regard to them been less critical, this mission would have marked an exceeding want of discrimination in the cabinet, but the choice of such a man, at such a time, to soothe irritation and soften a harsh and ungrateful measure—We want words to express our admiration at the little wisdom which must have produced it!

If recent information from New-york be correct, the event is such as might be expected; the American ministry disgusted at the ungracious conduct of Mr. Jackson have broken off all intercourse with him, and thus the breach with that country instead of being closed is unhappily widened and prolonged.

The wisdom of that policy by which our conduct towards foreign nations has been regulated for more than fifteen years, may now be fairly estimated by its effects. We need not bring forward the objects proposed at different times to be attained by those intrusted with the administration of affairs, during this long and arduous period, and how often they have varied, and how constantly been frustrated. This has repeatedly been done, and many endeavours made to impress on the public mind, that, when there were ample means to execute, constant miscarriage could only arise from a head altogether incapable to contrive. The same system is still continued, after all it has produced, and seems likely to produce, abroad and at home. We commenced the period alluded to with the world our friends, and if we cannot now entirely reverse the position, yet it would

be almost an absurdity to say that we have a single ally. When the prospects abroad are so gloomy, we might inquire if our condition is much improved at home. This is to us a consideration above all others important, when we may so soon have to seek in the improvements of this condition, for motives to animate us in a contest with a foreign enemy for our hearths and altars.

Continental politics are now nearly become a subject of curious speculation from which we should withdraw much of our attention; as we are not, or ought not to be deeply interested in any matter over which we have no possible controul. Therefore, as the sphere of action is greatly contracted, and the foundation narrowed on which we have formerly been principal performers, let it be made up by increased energy and attention to what still remains within our own power. The people of this country would do well to consider, that the whole continent of Europe, except perhaps the fortress of Gibraltar, will shortly be at the absolute disposal of a man whom we have loaded with all manner of abuse, and accused of every species of crime, but whom we allow nevertheless to be a most able and formidable enemy; and that this man, if war continues, will assuredly employ all his widely extended means for our destruction as a nation, and to effectually disable us from doing him future injury. The inquiry recurs,—are we prepared for this state of things? has the government such confidence in the country, the *whole* country; has each man that confidence in his neighbour, as to say—our enemies are numerous without, but we are united at home; our allies have left us by choice or necessity, we are deserted by the world, but we can depend on each other, and therefore have nothing to fear? Can *we* say—Our situation is enviable, all our disabilities are removed, our grievances redressed, our abuses corrected; we are exposed to no *legal* restraints *hostile* to the spirit of the constitution, our complaints are duly considered, and every attention paid to our comforts and even our prejudices, that we may become a happy people, unanimous in our determination to resist aggression and chearfully to risque our lives in defence of the superior happiness and advantages we enjoy? These are inquiries worth attending to; the answer to them is not a matter of small concern, but of the most vital importance, as on it may shortly depend our very existence as an independent people. We should endeavour to see the whole of our danger that we may be prepared to repel it: if there are defects in the social system under which we live, it behoves every friend to his country to give his active co-operation in bringing them to light, and removing them, that complete confidence may take place between the government and the people, and between every individual in the community, ere the period arrives when safety *must* depend on unanimity.

ENGLAND

Symptoms of a return of public spirit are apparent. These symptoms have been accelerated by the views which the ministry have given of their incapacity and wavering. George Canning's letter to the Earl of Camden lets out more of their secret manœuvring. The plan fixed to day was changed tomorrow. No business could prosper under such direction. Their system of *four times changed councils* were, without doubt, also adopted in their plans, if such wavering can deserve the name of plans, for the campaign in Spain and Holland. As was to be expected, their schemes have miserably failed, disease in the pestilential swamps of Walcheren and the scarcely less noxious plains of Spain and Portugal has caused a distressing loss of lives, and added to the miseries occasioned by their ill concerted schemes. The people are indignant under such treatment, and the demand for reform is considerably strengthened by the perception of the blunders the ministry have committed. Distrust is openly expressed, that from the present constitution of parliament, an effectual examination will not take place, and hence arises an increased demand for a reform in the mode of returning representatives to the house of commons so as to give the people a greater check on their representatives. The Edinburgh reviewers who in a late

number had with much sophistry scouted the idea of reform, have in their last number retracted their former sentiments, and admit the necessity of reform, unless the house of commons institute a vigorous inquiry on their meeting. The business now comes home to every man. All ranks feel the increasing pressure of the times. The prices of all articles of domestic expenditure, of all the cloathing used by our families, and of the meat we use at our tables, are additionally enhanced by the weight of taxation occasioned by our unsuccessful and ruinous expeditions. The pressure of the times comes home to every individual, and he thus becomes interested in the cause of promoting reform

The city of London are regaining their former spirit. Pitt by artifice and force almost completely succeeded in destroying it. The effects of his schemes still remain in part, the recovery is progressive, but it is likely to be accelerated by the distresses of the times. The present Lord Mayor, unlike his predecessor, favours the cause of the people. He and Sheriff Wood are not likely to be made baronets. But what is far better, they will most probably succeed in obtaining the approbation of their own minds, and the thanks of a grateful people. At a common council held on the 5th inst. a spirited address to the king praying for inquiry into the unsuccessful expeditions was carried by the majority of one; at another common council on the 13th, the original opponents of petitioning at all came forward, and succeeded in substituting a less strong address in the place of the one formerly agreed upon. But on the next day a common hall of the livery of London, the body of electors of which the common council are only the representatives in what may be called the city parliament, voted a strong and energetic address to be presented to the King. The address from the common council we lay before our readers with the king's answer among the official documents.

From the answer it appears that ministers entertain some hopes of being able to resist inquiry. It remains to be seen how they will be able to stand their ground on the meeting of parliament. On the 21st inst. the day of the annual elections for common council men, the elections decidedly preponderated in favour of the popular candidates, and the advocates for a thorough-going inquiry. Throughout the ensuing year it is hoped that the common council assisted by the patriotic Mayor, Thomas Smyth and Sheriff Wood will manifest that they will no longer be the supple instruments of the treasury but assert their independence. After the dreadful calamities we have suffered to have it avowed that ministers see no cause for inquiry ought to rouse the spirit of the nation, to instruct their representatives, at least such of them, as owe their elections to the free suffrages of the people. The representatives of rotten boroughs have no electors, with whom they can feel a sympathetic interest. What men buy, they think they have a right to sell, and such a state of things requires to be amended, that in a free parliament, the free voice of the people should prevail.

A change of cabinets without a parliamentary reform will be of no advantage to the country. Administrations cannot be trusted without effectual checks. The Fox and Grenville administration though so incomparably better than their successors, that it is almost degrading to form a comparison between them, were yet not free from making great blunders. The bringing of Lord Ellenborough into the cabinet was a grand mistake. In a free country it is always dangerous to blend the functions of a judge with the courtly manners of the cabinet. The decisions of a judge should be above suspicion, and he should be untrammelled by any circumstance in the remotest degree affecting his independence.

Our readers will also find a speech of Robert Waithman at the common hall worthy of their perusal. This upright man has long advocated the cause of the people in the common council in the worst of times: We trust his powerful abilities, and virtuous independent sentiments will soon have fuller scope, and his services receive some reward by his becoming

one of the representatives in parliament for the city of London. We hear this event will probably take place on the first vacancy. While the minions of power are so amply rewarded, the people should shew they can be grateful. The return of Sir Francis Burdett free of expense by Westminster is a glorious example to electors.

As a proof of the liberal disposition of Bonaparte to encourage an improvement in the state of the French nation, and by the salutary infusion of instruction to give content to them, the following observations selected from the close of a report of a committee of the Institute of France on the progress of the sciences from the epoch of the French revolution in 1789 to 1808 by order of the Emperor with his answer may be admitted in evidence. The report is throughout highly encomiastic and contains not a little of the boasting so congenial to the French character, but it is evident such liberal sentiments as follow would not have been used, if it were not well known they would be agreeable to Napoleon. He is as much aided in his views of aggrandisement, or ambition, call it what we please, by the victories which he obtains over men's minds, as well of the French, as of the nations he overruns, as by his military prowess and his potent armies. When will the old governments learn the obvious lesson, that well timed concessions and needed reforms are the best securities for stability, and increasing the happines of both rulers and people by satisfying the just demand of the latter?

The committee thus address their potent chief. "To lead the human mind to its noble destination—the knowledge of truth; to diffuse sound ideas amongst the lowest classes of the people; to withdraw men from the empire of prejudice and passions; to constitute reason as the sovereign arbiter and guide of public opinion; such is the essential object of the sciences; thus it is that they concur most powerfully in the advancement of civilization; this is what ought to secure to them the protection of governments, who wish to render their power immoveable, by founding it on the common welfare,

THE EMPEROR'S ANSWER.

Gentlemen, presidents, secretaries, and deputies of the first class of the Institute.

"I desired to hear your report on the progress of the human mind during these last years, in order that what you might have to state, may be heard by all nations, and reduce to silence the detractors of our age, who, endeavouring to cause the human mind to retrograde, seem to have for their end the extinction of it. I wished to know what remained for me to do, in order to encourage your labours, and to console myself, for not having it in my power any longer to contribute otherwise to their success. The good of my people, and the glory of my throne, are equally interested in the prosperity of the sciences.

My minister of the home department, will report to me on your demands, you may rely constantly on the effects of my protection."

Such language, let it be uttered by whom it may, is deserving of applause. On the subject of education "among the lowest classes," we have much to imitate, and on such points false shame should not cause us to blush in receiving instruction, though from an enemy. It would be happy for the old governments if by anticipating Bonaparte in salutary reforms they wrested from him one of the engines, which so forcibly aids him in the countries he attacks. If the Spanish nation should be forced to submit to him, they will at least have the consolation of being relieved from the oppressive and intolerable yoke of the inquisition.

Yet let us not be taxed as general or indiscriminating admirers of the French ruler. As friends of liberty we have much against him. Although we shall not descend into unmanly scurrility, and count it unjust to withhold such praise, as may be justly due to him, yet with the energy of freemen undazzled by his splendid qualities, we shall not hesitate to point out the injuries sustained by the glorious cause of liberty under his rule. If he encourage the sciences,

he seeks to render them subservient to his view of turning the people's attention from their political state, and lays an interdict on free inquiry, cautiously preventing by means of his literary guards bold truths from reaching the ears of the French nation. A translation of Fox's most valuable historical fragment, a lasting monument of his patriotism, and sound political feeling, has lately been translated into French, but care has been taken to expunge those passages, in which the principles of liberty are so energetically displayed.—A proof at once of the intrinsic excellence of the original work, and of the fear which prevails lest the spark of freedom should be again kindled in the breasts of Frenchmen.

It is a subject of gratulation that Lord Grenville has carried his election for the chancellorship of the University of Oxford; in opposition to the influence of the ministerial candidate Lord Eldon. Although some allowance must be made for the fears some of the electors arising from the tottering condition of the present administration, influencing their votes, yet we are willing to hail this circumstance as in some measure a triumph over bigotry. The cry of No Popery was revived against Lord Grenville, and the strength of the ministry was staked on the issue of the election. Liberality triumphed, and the University of Oxford shewed itself superior to the popular cry. We refer to the documents at the end of this article, for a manly dispassionate address from the friends of Lord Grenville on the occasion.

We congratulate our readers on the well directed and successful attempt of Sir Samuel Romilly, to lessen the number of capital convictions by his bill, passed last session, to change the punishment of privately stealing from the person, into transportation for life, or for seven years, or to three years imprisonment in penitentiary houses. He made this first attempt as introductory to his plan for gradually lessening the lists of crimes, for which the punishment of death is awarded. We rejoice that in this *iron age*, when "the soldier and his sword," stand so prominent as objects of almost undivided attention, this humane voice was attended to. Transportation, in the present state of our population, affords almost the only probable chance of reclaiming those incorrigible offenders, who amid the temptations of old habits, are in these countries likely only to repeat their crimes, but who in a thinly settled country, and in a different state of society, might possibly be brought to change their habits. Death has been called the most economical punishment, but an enlightened legislature will never weigh the expences of transportation, even if they should amount to 200*l.* a piece, against the probability of reclaiming from vice, the unhappy victims of error. Much is spent in useless expenditures, in pensions, sinecures, and enormous salaries. Let these be retrenched, but let none grudge the cost of attempting to rescue the unhappy convict from that state of misery into which he has plunged himself. Such penuriousness would be sordid indeed. The punishment of death is so indiscriminately awarded, as to defeat the effect intended.

Colonel Wardle has not succeeded in his prosecution for a conspiracy against Mary Ann Clarke and the Wrights. No grounds appear for retracting the opinion formerly advanced, that throughout this business the the honour of the Colonel has not been impeached. If like Francis I. he have lost every thing, he may also add, "but not my honour." In the course of the trial there is assertion against assertion, and near the close an attempt was made to give the preponderance against him, by adducing the evidence of an attorney, who was engaged on the opposite side. Colonel Wardle may probably have made some promises to induce the slippery lady to give her evidence, and we know informers are every day paid, but no specific promise to pay for the furniture to the Wrights appears to be substantiated. Besides we find Mrs. Clarke was taken out of the hands of the Colonel, and a higher bribe given to suppress that correspondence corroborative of her evidence, for the sale of which the Colonel might expect she would have been more honourably reimbursed. The

Colonel in his letter to Lord Ellenborough, has, with admirable coolness and perspicuity, pointed out the strong parts of his case, and shown how much may be said in his favour. Meetings have been held in London and other places to raise subscriptions to indemnify the Colonel for the expences he has incurred in the public service. This is honourable. He who puts himself forth in the cause of the public, should be indemnified against trick and quibble. The investigation which he brought forward was of more importance, and had greater effect in opening the eyes of the nation, to our real situation than all the enquiries respecting the unsuccessful expeditions. The latter were calculated to serve the interest of a party, and to effect a change between the ins and the outs: the former was displeasing to all parties, but went radically to the sources of the evils of our situation.

The Duke of York sat on the bench with the judge, during the trial, although he may be almost considered as a party in the cause. Had he no friend to intimate to him that an attempt to put on a bold face is no proof of innocence? The people have already pronounced a verdict on his conduct, grounded on the corroborative evidence, which came out in the course of the investigation, and consequently not to be reversed by any conduct of an unprincipled woman, who, throughout the business was credited no farther than her testimony was essentially and irrefragably supported by collateral unquestionable authority.

The disputes between the managers of Covent-garden Theatre and the people, are at length happily settled. A business trifling in itself became at last a matter of considerable political importance. The rates of admission did not deserve so much public attention. The impropriety of private boxes, and shutting up so much of the theatre from the use of the public, savoured too much of exclusive privilege. But the business was highly aggravated on the part of the managers. Hired bruisers were introduced into the theatre, and when these failed, recourse was had to severe legal prosecutions, and to a host of Bow-street runners to conquer the people. One spirited individual, Henry Clifford, a respectable barrister, had the public spirit to interfere, and commenced an action for false imprisonment, against one of the retainers of the theatre. A jury contrary to the slavish doctrine, advanced by Serjeant Shepherd in the defence, that a jury should find a verdict according to the law laid down by a judge, gave 5*l.* damages to the plaintiff. The managers thus defeated, presently submitted, and the upright decision of a jury put an end to a series of prosecutions, and to a business, which though of no real interest or importance in its rise, threatened to make great encroachment on British liberty. We have one more instance of the vast importance of trial by jury to the liberties of a country.

It is of great importance to have judges really independent. All men are fallible, and power vested in few hands is liable to be abused. There is a leaning to the side of power; a prince, by his presence on the bench, may appear to wish to influence; state policy may cause a judge to express a fear that public opposition to the managers of a stage may lead to the subversion of government; and another terrified by some appearances, may declare "that these are not times to show unusual lenity to rioters." But if juries do their duty, liberty is safe; to them we look for our security, while they discharge their highly important functions with moderation, just discrimination, and a dignified assertion of their rights.

We have now, in the course of our labours, arrived at the close of the year 1809, a year in which many occurrences have taken place to mark the present times, and entitle them to the character of *a deplorable crisis*. The year was ushered in by the miseries sustained by our army in Spain, and the battle of Corunna, a contest in which much was suffered, and nothing gained. Then followed a session of parliament, in which many foul practices were discovered, in which much was proved, but no effectual means were taken to prevent the recurrence of such shameful transactions, and a woman highly

immoral, was useful in bringing to light many manœuvres in the present system of governing. Her evidence, incomplete in itself, and certainly deserving of no more credit than is due to a common informer, was remarkably corroborated by the production of facts, to which she afforded a clue, and by a defence most injudiciously conducted, with matchless impudence and hypocrisy. Uninstructed by the prior misfortunes from which even the caution and genius of Sir John Moore could not protect, another army is sent to Spain. A dashing general penetrates into the heart of the country, unsupported with the means necessary to maintain so advanced a position. A title to the general, and a profuse waste of human blood, are the unprofitable results of a victory at Talevera, for in a few days the British army was compelled to retreat, or to adopt the courtly phrase of the general, *celerity of movement* was necessary, and to leave the hospital to the humanity of the French, while they afterwards remain in inactivity and obscurity. To close the series of disasters and blunders, a large armament was sent to Holland, and a short possession of the island of Walcheren, is the only recompense for the thousands of lives lost by an unhealthy climate. While all these things are carrying on abroad, to consummate the evils of our situation, our ministers are trying to supplant each other in the cabinet, and two of them fight in the field. An attempt is then made to patch up an administration, and the Marquis of Wellesley is brought from Spain to infuse vigour into their councils. Judging of the past, and sorrowfully anticipating the future, we may say of such affected and ill adapted vigour,

"Curse on their *vigour*, it has undone their country."

Such is the review of the past year. During the revolution of twelve months, the crisis of our fate has rapidly advanced. What another year may produce is unknown, but we cannot flatter our readers with a speedy prospect of better days. All now is gloom!

IRELAND

Is ingloriously silent. With the exception of the Catholics endeavouring to reclaim their just rights, all is a dead calm. Not a breeze is stirring to drive away the fogs of our political atmosphere.

OFFICIAL DOCUMENT.

THE CITY ADDRESS.

The following Address was read by the Recorder:

TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY,

The humble, loyal, and dutiful Address and Petition of the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Commons of the City of London, in Common Council assembled.

Most gracious Sovereign,

We your Majesty's most faithful, loyal and dutiful subjects, the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Commons of the City of London, in Common Council assembled, most humbly approach your Majesty's sacred person, in the perfect assurance that your Majesty will graciously condescend to receive the suggestions of your faithful and loyal Citizens, on subjects which seriously and deeply affect their interests, in common with the rest of your Majesty's people.

We have witnessed with deep regret the disastrous failure of the late Expedition, as the magnitude of its equipment had raised the just hopes and expectations of the Country to some permanent benefit.

And we cannot avoid expressing to your Majesty the sorrow and indignation with which we are affected, by the unhappy dissensions that have prevailed among your Majesty's Ministers, and our fears that such dissensions may prove eminently prejudicial to the best interests of the Nation.

Your Majesty's faithful Citizens, actuated by loyal attachment to your Sacred Person and Illustrious House, and solicitous for the honour of your Majesty's arms and the dignity and solidity of your Majesty's Councils, are deeply impressed with the necessity of an early and strict Inquiry into the causes of the failure of the late Expedition, therefore pray your Majesty will direct inquiry to be forthwith instituted, in order to ascertain the causes which have occasioned it.

Signed by order of Court,

HENRY WOODTHORPE.

To which Address and Petition his Majesty was graciously pleased to return the following Answer.

I thank you for your expressions of duty and attachment to me and to my Family.

The recent Expedition to the Scheldt